

It is hoped that further monitoring will take place for the next two years and anybody interested in helping especially with the evening larval searches should contact me.— ROBIN FIELD, 166 Sherwood Avenue, Northampton, NN2 8TE, e-mail rfield8633@aol.com.

**Red-tipped Clearwing *Synanthedon formicaeformis* (Esp.) (Lep.: Sesiidae) rediscovered at Borough Fen Decoy, Northamptonshire, with nearby records from Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire**

On 28 June 2004, I visited Borough Fen Duck Decoy near Newborough, Northamptonshire (O. S. grid reference TF 200080; VC 32), with some pheromone lures to follow up a record of the Red-tipped Clearwing *S. formicaeformis*. The species was discovered and last observed there by the late Rick Pilcher in 1975 and is listed in his book about the Decoy (Cook & Pilcher, 1982. *The history of Borough Fen Decoy*. Providence. Ely.). The lures were MYO, TIP & VESP, as supplied by the Dutch Plant Research International in 2001. I am delighted to report that a single fresh individual of the Red-tipped Clearwing turned up to my lures at 15.30 hours, when I suspended them against the trunk of a fallen Crack Willow tree *Salix fragilis* by one of the arms of the decoy, near the centre of the site. The moth settled briefly on a sunny patch on the trunk by two of the lures, which I was using in combination because I did not have one specifically for the Red-tipped Clearwing. I had removed the MYO lure by this stage. I have used the combination of three lures successfully to detect the Red-tipped Clearwing in the past but find the species pays only a fleeting interest, unlike the more sustained attention paid by some species of clearwing to other pheromone lures (e.g. Waring, 2001b, c, 2004). The moth at the Decoy flitted off within a few seconds, flew past the lure and was not seen again. Quite a strong breeze was moving the leaves on the trees and the vegetation was dry. It is of interest to report that in the previous half hour I had tried the three lures in two other positions on the site, less than 100m away, both by a Crack Willow, in similar weather, without success. The moths reported by Waring & Wright (2003. *Br. J. ent. Nat. Hist.* **16**: 258-262) arrived at 13.55 hours, so my efforts at the Decoy had not started too early in the day however. I had also tried briefly at the Decoy without any success on the afternoon of 23 June 2004. Most of the willows on the site are Crack Willow but I have also seen Grey Willow *S. cinerea* near the capture site. I hope this experience may help and encourage others searching for this moth to find it successfully. From the records below, I would suggest that I was very early in the flight season.

The following information shows the significance of this new record. Rick Pilcher's record was the last of the few Northamptonshire records which the County Macro-moth Recorder for Northamptonshire, John Ward (pers. comm.), had on his files at the start of 2004. It transpires that my 2004 record was the first in the county for 29 years and only the second in 114 years! The status, distribution and records of

the macro-moths of Northamptonshire can now be viewed on the web-site. The only other records shown for this species in Northamptonshire are three from the nineteenth century and all three are the work of E. Wallis. The first was at Pytchley Spinney on 8 July 1888, the second was "near Kettering" on 3 July 1890 and the last of his records was "near Peterborough" on 8 July 1890. All were single adults and the 1890 records were of them resting on the leaves of Osier *Salix viminalis*. John informs me that in the past he has searched for the species a number of times in Northamptonshire, always in vain, including using pheromone lures on one occasion. Consequently the status of the moth in Northamptonshire is given as "rare, former resident but likely to be under-recorded". We now know it is still present. I e-mailed the result to John Ward who placed it on the web-site noticeboard within days. This may have encouraged others to search because two additional positive results were reported over the next few weeks. On 6 July 2004 Phil Horsnail attracted two individuals to pheromone lures at Pitsford Reservoir (SP 77) in the Nene Valley and on 20 July 2004 George Higgs attracted four to lures at Yardley Chase (SP 85).

There appear to be no records for Huntingdonshire since the publication of the Victoria History (Omer-Cooper, 1926), according to Barry Dickerson, County Moth Recorder for Huntingdonshire (pers. comm.). However, I was aware of two recent records of the species from VC 29 Cambridgeshire which led me to believe there was a good chance I would find the moth at the Decoy. Back in May 1991, I saw and photographed three live adult moths Peter Kirby had just reared from a discarded piece of felled willow collected the previous year from the side of the river Cam at Milton, (TL 488622), just north of Cambridge and about 40km south-east of Peterborough (see *British Wildlife* 12: 284). The moths were subsequently exhibited at the annual exhibition of the British Entomological & Natural History Society (*Br. J. ent. Nat. Hist.* 5: 57 & 82). Peter informs me that he has never seen the moth before or since in the three above counties, though he has seen it on single occasions in Norfolk, Yorkshire and Derbyshire. In October 1995, Howard Hillier telephoned me to report that he had been shown a good photograph of a live Red-tipped Clearwing taken that summer at Lattersey Pit (TL 284963) near Whittlesey, about 10km south-east of the Decoy. Subsequently, on 2 August 2004 Alan Stubbs saw a single adult, probably a female, at King's Dyke Pit (TL 247976) about 6km from Lattersey Pit. King's Dyke Pit is managed as a nature reserve by the brick company that owns it. The moth was flying around a fissure in the bark on the trunk of a Purple Osier *Salix purpurea*. The fissure was sticky and had attracted many aphids. No egg-laying was confirmed however. It seems likely that further searches of additional sites in these counties will produce evidence that the Red-tipped Clearwing is more widespread and better distributed than the existing records indicate.

I would like to thank the private owner of the Decoy for his access permission and his enthusiasm for me to record moths there, John Ward for the historical records, the above-named for their observations, and Writtle College for support in undertaking the fieldwork and preparing this report.— PAUL WARING, Reader, Centre

for Environment & Rural Affairs, Writtle College, Essex. Contact address: Windmill View, 1366 Lincoln Road, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6 LS (E-mail: paul\_waring@btinternet.com).

### **My myiasis or a brief account of the wondrous interconnectedness of life**

I was surprised yet fascinated – but honestly not alarmed – when I pulled a 16 mm (5/8”) maggot from my flesh, an uninvited “guest” that returned with me from two weeks of butterfly fieldwork in the Central American country of Belize. It was the Neotropical or human bot, the parasitic larva of the botfly *Dermatobia hominis* Linnaeus, family Oestridae, known in Latin America by such names as berne, nuche, and tórsalo. This widespread dipteran, which infests a large number of different mammals and even birds, has a remarkable, if not unique, life history. (Other less specialized myiatic flies reported to parasitize people occur in most of the world’s warmer regions.) The female botfly does not lay eggs directly on human skin, but rather captures an active mosquito, other species of fly, or tick and carefully deposits 15 to 30 ova on the underside of the body. When, for example, the carrier mosquito sucks blood, contact with or warmth from the host (in this case, me!) stimulates rapid hatching, and the tiny grub quickly penetrates the skin through the bite or along a hair follicle. There it remains inside a subcutaneous cavity near the entrance hole that it needs for breathing, feeding raspingly on tissue and molting twice. The larval period lasts approximately eight weeks in the body (mine was there about five), after which the spiny maggot leaves the tumorous swelling it produced, dropping to the ground and pupating in the soil. After a month or so, the rather large, metallic blue adult fly, which has atrophied mouthparts and does not eat, emerges to mate and begin the life cycle again.

Besides occasional discomfort, itching, and fluid discharge, I was not terribly bothered by the bot. The lesion, which my doctor originally diagnosed as a boil, quickly healed, and I was assured my health was never at serious risk. Furthermore, these botfly grubs are said to secrete an antibiotic that prevents the growth of competing bacteria and other infective agents. The live maggot was donated to the entomology department at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, where there was talk of using chicken meat to try to continue its development to adulthood.

I am almost embarrassed to add that, yes, I gave my “companion” the somewhat endearing name of Petey (the parasite).— KEITH WOLFE, 616 Alumrock Drive, Antioch, California 94509-6944, USA.